

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-_____

Authorizing Application to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission for Fiscal Year 2020 for a Broadband Grant and Further Endorsing a Partnership with Bertram Communications, LLC; Netwurx, LLC; Dodge County; and ThriveED.

Executive Summary

Broadband has often been referred to as the infrastructure of the future. During the development of the County's Strategic Plan, broadband expansion was highlighted as a key need for Jefferson County that impacts all rural and urban residents, businesses, medical services, agri-businesses, education access, residential development, and quality of life. This broadband expansion initiative will also assist in improving the county wide emergency communications system. As a result, broadband expansion was highlighted as one of the key short-term goals for Jefferson County. The broadband expansion goal of the Strategic Plan was recently validated by interviews with the County's townships and municipalities in preparation for the Comprehensive Plan update where the need for broadband was a consistent topic brought forward by Jefferson County communities.

The County has taken significant steps in moving this strategic goal forward. On December 11, 2018, the Jefferson County Board enacted a Broadband Forward! Community Model Ordinance with the intent of facilitating expansion of broadband access in unserved and underserved areas of Jefferson County. On March 12, 2019, the Jefferson County Board approved the development of a Broadband Working Group charged with additional efforts to expand services within the County. The efforts of the Broadband Working Group have included engagement with private entities, economic development organizations, and Dodge County. It also included education on the current state of broadband in the County, potential options to provide services, and review of grant funds available to the County to expand broadband.

On April 11, 2019, the Broadband Working Group recommended that the County Board engage in a pilot broadband expansion project, in partnership with Netwurx Internet, to provide broadband service to underserved and unserved portions of Jefferson County. This recommendation was approved by the County Board on April 16, 2019, with Jefferson County providing \$45,610 towards the project and Netwurx Internet providing \$30,407 additional funds and in-kind contributions. This project is projected to provide broadband service to 257 residential properties, 28 agri-businesses, 2 multi-dwelling units, and 68 businesses with an anticipated completion date by the end of 2019.

Most recently, the focus of the Broadband Working Group has been preparing for the 2020 Wisconsin Public Service Commission Broadband Expansion Grant and potential partners to assist in broadband expansion efforts. On August 29, 2019, the Broadband Working Group authorized the County Administrator to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Netwurx Internet and Bertram Communications for the purpose of applying for a 2020 Public Service Commission Grant. Further, the Broadband Working Group held discussions with Dodge County and ThriveED, the regional economic development organization providing services to Dodge and Jefferson County, in support of a comprehensive broadband expansion

project. Collaboration with the private sector and other governmental entities as well as the support of economic development organizations for broadband expansion are additional goals within the County's Strategic Plan.

To further broadband expansion efforts in Jefferson County, the County Board has included up to \$250,000 in the 2020 Budget to match the funds awarded through the Public Service Commission grant. The Broadband Working Group considered this resolution at its meeting on November 6, 2019, and recommended forwarding to the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors for approval

WHEREAS, the Executive Summary is incorporated into the resolution, and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County has identified collaboration, access to education, and support of economic development activities, to include agri-business, as key goals in the Jefferson County Strategic Plan, and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County has identified Broadband as a crucial strategic goal to move forward as part of the Jefferson County Strategic Plan, and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County has showed its commitment to this furtherance of the expansion of broadband goal by applying to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission for Broadband Forward Certification and Telecommuter Forward Certification, and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County has further supported the expansion of broadband as a strategic goal by developing a pilot project with Netwurx LLC, that was approved by the County Board on April 16, 2019, which is anticipated to provide service access to 257 residential properties, 28 Agri-businesses, 2 multi dwelling units and 68 businesses, and

WHEREAS, the proposed Jefferson County/ThriveED PSC grant application is designed to expand on the investment of the Jefferson County pilot project and the Town of Watertown PSC Grant project, and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County is working to coordinate the proposed PSC broadband expansion project with the County Communications Project to facilitate economy of scale and system redundancy, and

WHEREAS, the PSC Broadband Expansion Project is supported by the Broadband Working Group with financial commitment supported by the County Board.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Jefferson County Board authorizes and supports the application by Thrive ED, on behalf of Jefferson County, to apply for the Public Service Commission Broadband Expansion Grant for 2020, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution ratifies the direction by the Broadband Working Group to form a partnership with Bertram Communications LLC, and

Netwurx Internet as providers to expand broadband infrastructure in Jefferson County and in furtherance of securing grant funding, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Jefferson County Board supports efforts to collaborate with Dodge County to support the expansion of broadband access in the region, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Jefferson County Administrator is authorized to execute any and all applications, agreements or similar documents necessary to pursue access to or enhancement of broadband services in Jefferson County and oversee the execution of said grant if successful.

Fiscal note: The 2020 budget has included matching funds in the Capital Projects account in conjunction with the Countywide Communication Project.

Ayes:_____ Noes:_____ Abstain:_____ Absent:_____ Vacant:_____

Referred By:
Broadband Working Group

11-12-19

REVIEWED: County Administrator:_____; Corporation Counsel:_____; Finance Director:_____